

come and go. They have seen U.N. officials rush to Baghdad to confer with Saddam with no easing of repression as a result. They have watched as U.N. resolutions, including those obligating Saddam to respect human rights, go not just unenforced but are not even cited in passing by the United Nations.

Again my congratulations to our Armed Forces and to our President. God bless them both.

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. CASE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Texas, our respected majority leader, for his remarks this morning. I think I and all of us owe him a happy birthday whenever he may be and we wish him a happy birthday on, I believe it is his 56th birthday. Unfortunately, there my commendations have to end for the morning because as the war in Iraq comes to its inevitable close and our focus turns back to our domestic issues, our domestic challenges and as they turn back to the number one challenge that we face domestically, which is our Federal budget and fixing our economy, which is an area that the majority leader did not cover, I must say to my colleagues and my constituents back home and my fellow citizens that when it comes to the Federal budget that has been proposed by our President and embraced by our Republican colleagues and as it comes to that budget that we will see later on the floor this week, I must say I am tempted to feel relieved, and I am tempted to feel relieved, because for too long I have been worrying about the little things like our economy and jobs and money and debt and education and health care.

At my State legislature like many of us in the State legislatures, I just spent a decade worrying about whether we had enough jobs, whether our taxes were fair, whether we were borrowing too much or whether we were spending too much, whether our kids were getting a good head start, whether our seniors had the basics, what my Hawaii would be like not next year but in 10, 20 years and what I could do to hand it off well. And at home, of course, because government is no different than a household in principle, my wife and I, we have long worried about our jobs and whether we could keep up with expenses, whether our debts were too high, whether our kids would grow up healthy, whether we could get a good, affordable education, whether our parents could live with decency. I am tempted to feel relieved because after all those years of worry both in my State legislature and at home, my Republican colleagues in the White House and here in the Congress have given me and are about to again give me a budg-

et to vote on that says basically, do not worry, your fears are for naught. You can have your cake and eat it, too. You can do whatever you want. It will all work out. Do not worry, be happy.

For example, let us take debt. My wife and I, we have been worrying about how much we owe. We do not like debt and when we have to incur debt we do not like it to get too high. We worry about retiring in debt. We worry about whether our kids are going to have to bail us out. We do not think that that is good for us and it is certainly not good for them. In the State legislature back in Hawaii, I worried for a long time about how much my State was borrowing, about whether our hard-earned dollars were going just to pay off debt, whether we were handing off Hawaii in better shape to our children than the Hawaii that we had been responsible for administering. But now I am tempted to feel relieved, because I am told my Federal Government is somehow different, I am told debt is good, do not worry about it, that the largest debt run-up since President Reagan's era is no problem. And Alan Greenspan, somebody that says debt is not bad, chronic debt is bad. Chronic debt does not work. It leads to a worsening economy. It leads to interest rate increases. I am told about Mr. Greenspan, he is all wet, do not worry about him.

Let us take taxes. In my State House, I embraced some tax relief in the 1990s, but I worried about whether that tax relief was going to those most in need, whether that tax relief was going to result in economic revitalization. I worried about the connection between lower taxes and an increased economy. Would cuts fix our economy? But here I am told, do not worry. We cannot give you any evidence of a connection between the tax cuts that we recommend and economic revitalization. And we do not have to worry about the Congressional Budget Office saying there is no connection. Do not worry, it will all work out.

Let us take expenses, especially unknown or uncertain expenses. My wife and I worry about expenses that we know about and those that we do not yet know about. We worry about college. We worry about setting money aside. We worry about a little bit of a rainy day fund to worry about things that do not come along. But now I am told from this budget, do not worry, we do not need a little rainy day fund. We already have one. It is called Social Security. We can bail it out if we need to and we do not even have to include known expenses, expenses that we may not know how much they will be exactly but we sure know that they are coming.

We all know, for example, that \$75 billion is just the first installment of our obligations overseas for the war with Iraq. Yet that is not factored into this budget. Why not? I do not know. I guess I am being told, do not worry about it, it will come later. And do not

worry about that. Do not worry about the long-term. We can get through the next couple of years. We can get through the things that are coming at us down the road. Do not worry about the projections of an increasing deficit, a deficit projected to increase by some estimates from 300 to \$400 billion up to close to a trillion dollars, given the full impact of this tax cut. Do not worry about that.

So I am a happy camper today. I do not have to worry. And if I were not so worried, I would be awfully scared.

MEDICAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about an issue that everyone should be aware of and I think more and more Americans are becoming concerned about and that is the rising cost of health care here in the United States. Some of the estimates this year, and we are talking to small businesspeople in my district, they are looking at increases in the cost of their health care of anywhere from 10 percent to 40 percent and some even more than that. One of the ideas that has been around for a number of years in terms of controlling the costs of health care in the United States is the concept of medical savings accounts. This is a plan that really goes back a long ways. As a matter of fact, in my district where we have an awful lot of farm families, they in effect have had medical savings accounts for a very long time. What they do is they essentially use their checking account as the medical savings account, but the principle is relatively simple and that is where people can put money away, either through their employer or individually, into a medical savings account to pay those ongoing medical bills. At the same time, they buy a catastrophic insurance policy that will pay those catastrophic expenses if they should come down with cancer, if they should need a major surgery, something like that. Catastrophic insurance is relatively inexpensive. And so in the last several years we have allowed more and more of the employers to do these medical savings accounts, to set up these programs on a pretax basis so that they get the advantages of the Tax Code. But there was one major, glaring error and omission from the legislation we passed in the past here in the Congress and that is that public employees could not participate in these. And so I have been talking to my public employees back in Minnesota. They would very much like to participate in medical savings accounts for a whole variety of reasons, one of which is it is a way that they can begin to save money for long-term care, because we are now beginning to

realize we are all getting older. I happen to be 52 years old. I was born in 1951. There were more babies born in 1951 than any other year, we are the peak of the baby boomers, and we are looking at this thing and saying, are there ways we can begin to put money away for long-term care. One of the ways you can do that is with medical savings accounts. But it is a glaring omission and it is terribly unfair to say that private employees in the private markets can go ahead and have access to these medical savings accounts but public employees cannot.

And so today I am introducing along with my colleagues the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. RAMSTAD), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY), the gentleman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KLINE) the Minnesota MSA Empowerment Act of 2003. Essentially what this bill will do is allow public employees on a pilot program basis to have access to the same kind of programs that private employees have access to. It is a very good bill. It is a way for us to actually find out just how well these MSAs will work, especially with public employees. I am confident that they will work if they are given a chance. This is a pilot program just for Minnesota to demonstrate that MSAs will work for the consumer, they will work to help reduce the cost of health care and ultimately make it possible so people can begin to set aside dollars long-term for long-term care.

This is a good piece of legislation. I hope the people of the appropriate policy committees will give it a fairing hearing and if they will I am confident that ultimately this will become law. Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in support of this important legislation.

CONCERNING THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE BUDGET RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise on the floor to call attention to the fiscal year 2004 budget resolution conference report and to express my opposition to the inclusion of any Medicaid or Medicare cuts as part of the final budget resolution.

Mr. Speaker, although the House-passed budget reconciliation contains an instruction to cut the Medicaid program by \$93 billion over 10 years, neither the Senate budget resolution nor the administration budget includes such devastating cuts to the Medicaid program. As Members know, the Medicaid program provides essential health coverage to 47 million low-income chil-

dren, working families, seniors and people with disabilities. Moreover, this critical safety net program under Medicare also contributes significantly to State economies by stimulating employment and business activity which we cannot afford to undermine.

States, Mr. Speaker, are currently facing the most severe budget crisis since World War II and nearly every State has proposed or enacted cuts in its Medicaid program. Any reduction in Federal Medicaid funding would place millions of vulnerable Americans now receiving Medicaid in jeopardy of losing their health insurance. Federal funding reductions would force States to implement even deeper cuts by restricting eligibility, eliminating or reducing critical health benefits and severely cutting or freezing provider reimbursement rates. As a result, Medicaid funding cuts would add millions more to the ranks of the 41 million Americans that are already uninsured.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I oppose inclusion in the budget of sweeping mandatory cuts of potentially \$75 billion over 10 years to the Medicare program. Although the Republican budget on the surface level appears to take a softer line on Medicare cuts as compared to Medicaid, in fact the budget requires billions of dollars of mandatory program cuts to the Medicare program. I will show my colleagues how. The budget provides \$400 billion in a reserve fund for Medicare reform. However, the budget also instructs the Committee on Energy and Commerce to come up with \$107 billion that have to be in cuts to either Medicare, Medicaid or SCHIP, the kids' health insurance program, over 10 years and also requires the Committee on Ways and Means to require \$62 billion in cuts, some or all of which could fall on Medicare. So although there is not an absolute requirement that it comes from Medicare, because those two committees will not have many choices, we are going to see Medicare cuts as well, as well as the mandatory Medicaid cuts.

Mr. Speaker, while the budget resolution does not direct Medicare cuts, I am very concerned because it does not preclude them and these committees will be allowed to cut Medicare if that is what is required to fulfill the reconciliation instructions. As a member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, I would do my best to prevent such cuts from taking place because the effects would be devastating to the structure and function of the Medicare program and, more importantly, to the health of our seniors and disabled.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to express my strong opposition to the inclusion of any Medicaid or Medicare cuts in the final budget resolution. They will only mean that more people will be uninsured, less health care services will be provided to a whole range of individuals, and all this is being done basically so that the Republicans can make more cuts for wealthy people, more tax cuts for the wealthy, more tax cuts for

corporate interests. It should not be done at the expense of Medicare or Medicaid.

IN MEMORY OF SERGEANT DONALD WALTERS, OREGON SERVICEMAN WHO MADE THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay my respect to a fallen soldier, a hero from my district who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

Sergeant Donald Walters grew up in Colorado, Springs, Colorado. His family moved to Salem, Oregon, when he was in middle school. As a teenager, Donald worked at a Salem grocery store. He liked to fish, camp and had a long-standing interest in the military. He wanted to make a difference. A year after graduating from North Salem High School, he joined the Army.

Donald was an aspiring writer of children's books. Donald served in the first Persian Gulf war, then left the military about 2 years ago. As a testament to his undying love of our country, he reenlisted in the Army after September 11. For the weeks that Sergeant Walters was missing in action, his community in Oregon showed their support. Nearly every house on the block was adorned with an American flag, a yellow ribbon, or both. Sergeant Walters leaves behind his wife Stacie, three loving daughters, his parents Arlene and Norman, and his sister Kimberly. To all those who he left behind, my heart and prayers are with you as well as the hearts and prayers of a grateful Nation. We will not forget you, Sergeant Donald Walters.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: Lord God, because Your prophet Jeremiah is so highly personal, agonizing for his people and constantly interacting with the members of his community, he becomes a model for the Members of the 108th Congress.

His hopes and visions, doubts and hesitations, anger and resentments, as